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ABSTRACT

The personal developmental levels of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were studied; and the hypothesis that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds would be less mature than other students in the developmental levels of autonomy, purpose, and interpersonal relationships was assessed. The effects of participation in a semester course of self-development and career exploration were also studied. The sample included 78 freshmen (22 males and 46 females) enrolled in a self-development and career exploration course at Murray State University (Kentucky) during the fall quarter of 1981. Of these, 39 were enrolled in the university's program of Special Services for Disadvantaged Students (SSDS). Each was administered the Student Development Task Inventory of R. B. Winston and others (1979), an instrument designed to measure individual growth and development of college students. The effects of the course were evaluated through pretest and posttest scores. No significant differences were found in the developmental levels of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and regularly admitted students, and no differences were found in the pretest and posttest scores of the two groups. Posttest scores improved for both groups, an indication of the possible advantages of the course. The guidance course may have assisted the SSDS students in career development and lifestyle planning. Three tables present study data. (SLD)

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DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED COLLEGE FRESHMAN

Stephen L. Yarbrough

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Developmental Levels of Economically Disadvantaged College Freshman

Stephen L. Yarbrough

The past twenty-five years have witnessed increased public interest in federal efforts to enhance participation of the economically disadvantaged in higher education. The desire to provide equal access to higher education has produced significant legislation in the form of the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the Higher Educational Amendments of 1968. The Special Services for Disadvantaged Students programs (SSDS) were authorized under the Higher Educational Amendments of 1968 and provided funding to institutions of higher education to provide academic, personal, and career counseling concurrent with remedial and developmental classes, tutoring, and ethnic studies for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Financial aid counseling, college orientation, and services to enhance positive self-concept were authorized.

Major components required by the legislation for all SSDS programs include: (1) academic assessment and assistance, (2) guidance and counseling, and (3) personal development. Davis, Burkheimer, and Borders-Patterson (1975) evaluated the effectiveness of the academic and counseling components of SSDS programs. Success of the academic portions of these programs have been confirmed by Astin (1970), Funches (1967), and Gordon (1969). Cognitive development differences have been reported by Hartman-Haas (1981) and Redmon (1982) in comparing regularly admitted students with disadvantaged students. Career maturity and career development have been examined by Sherry and Staley (1984) and Healy, Mourton, Anderson, and Robinson (1984). However, there appears to be a lack of research focused on the personal development component of the SSDS programs.

Psychosocial theorists have recognized various developmental tasks or stages for college-age students as occurring at or about a specific period in the life-long growth process (Chickering, et al., 1981). Three of the major vectors of development identified by Chickering were becoming more autonomous, freeing interpersonal relationships, and clarifying purposes. The development of the young adults' self-concept is closely related to these vectors.

This study was an attempt to determine if there was a variation in the personal development levels of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds significantly different in the developmental areas of self-reliance, self-confidence, orientation to

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the future, commitment to a tentative career field, and sensitivity to the needs and well-being of others (Winton et al., 1981). It was hypothesized that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds would be less mature than regular students in the developmental levels of autonomy, purpose, and interpersonal relationships. The study also sought to assess the effect of student participation in a semester course of self-development and career exploration for SSDS students and non-SSDS students.

Method

SUBJECTS

The 78 students included in this study were enrolled in Guidance 100, Self Development and Career Exploration, at Murray State University during Fall Quarter, 1981. Murray State University is a state-supported comprehensive institution of 7,800 students. The sample consisted of two groups. The first group comprised 39 students between the ages of 17 and 22 years enrolled in Murray State's SSDS program. The second group of 29 students between the ages of 17 and 22 years, were regularly enrolled students. The SSDS group consisted of 12 males and 27 females and the non-SSDS group contained 10 males and 19 females.

INSTRUMENT

Each student was administered the Student Development Task Inventory, revised, 2nd edition (SDTI-2), (Winston, Miller & Prince, 1979b). This instrument is based on Chickering's seven vectors of development and is designed to measure the individual growth and development of 18-25 year old college students (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1979a). The SDTI-2 is a 140 item true-false response inventory designed to be administered in either group settings or with individual college students.

Reliability of the instrument, as reported by the authors, was established by: (a) test-retest to determine stability using Pearson product-moment correlations of the two week test-retest results. These correlations ranged from .85 to .93, and (b) internal consistency reliability using Cronback-Alpha coefficients for the inventory as a whole with a coefficient of .90 (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1979b). Validity was estimated by correlation with the College Student Questionnaire scales (Peterson, 1968) and the Career Development Inventory (Adult Form 1) by Super, Zelkowitz, and Thompson (1975) using a t-test for independent means which proved statistically significant at the .05 and .01 levels. The SDTI-2 provides scores in three major developmental task areas (developing

autonomy, developing purpose, and developing mature interpersonal relations). Each major task is further divided into three sub-tasks which results in nine sub-scores. The authors stress the fact that the instrument is not intended to be diagnostic or to detect pathology, but is rather designed to assess the level of development and personal growth of traditional college-age students.

PROCEDURE

Using a table of random numbers (Glass & Stanley, 1970), the SDTI-2 was administered to one-half of the SSDS students and one-half of the non-SSDS students enrolled in Guidance 100, Self Development and Career Exploration, during the second week of Fall Semester, 1981. The remaining one-half of each group participated in assigned class activities. The instrument was again administered as a post-test during the last week of the semester to those students not included in the initial or pre-testing. The data collected in the study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie et al., 1975) and the SPSS Update 7-9 (Hull & Nie, 1981) using the statistical procedures for multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA). Several t-test statistics were hand calculated to compare the means of the collected data to the Georgia sample means presented by Winston, Miller, and Prince (1979b).

Results

Table 1 indicates that there were no significant differences in the developmental levels of students from disadvantaged backgrounds when compared with regularly admitted students enrolled in an introductory guidance course as measured by the SDTI-2. Further, no differences were found on the pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups for the three developmental tasks nor on the interaction between groups and pre-test/post-test when all dependent variables were considered simultaneously.

Several post-hoc analyses were completed to further describe the performances of athe group. Individual t-test analyses were made to describe the relationship between the means scores of the Georgia sample presented in the SDTI-2 manual (Winston, Miller & Prince, 1979b) with pre-test/post-test scores of the two groups.

Table 1

Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance: Group 1 by Group 2 by Pre-test by Post-test on Three Task Scores

Effect	Wilk's Lambda	Approx. F	df	p
Group	.89534	2.41580	3.62	.075
Pre-test/Post-test	.93738	1.38065	3.62	.257
Group by Pre-test/Post-test	.92776	1.60921	3.62	.196

Table 2 depicts a comparision of pre-test and post-test means and standard deviations between the SSDS student group and the Georgia group.

Task Two, Purpose, was statistically significant ($p < .05$) on the pre-test means. Neither of the other two task mean scores approached significance and none of the post-test mean score differences were significant.

Table 2

A Comparison of Pre-test/Post-test Means and Standard Deviations Between the SSDS Students and SDTI-2 Georgia Sample

	PRE-TEST					POST-TEST				
	SSDS (N = 21)		SDTI-2 (N = 88)			SSDS (N = 18)		SDTI-2 (N = 88)		
TASK	$\bar{X}$	SD	X	SD	t	$\bar{X}$	SD	X	SD	t
Autonomy	22.67	5.84	27.30	6.68	1.12	27.11	5.55	27.30	6.68	-.13
Purpose	22.81	6.32	27.92	7.56	3.20*	28.06	8.46	27.92	7.56	-.07
Int. Rel.	30.48	4.27	30.08	5.77	.36	29.83	4.55	30.08	5.77	.20

*$p < .05$

Because of the significant difference in mean scores found on Purpose, an additional analysis was made on the three components of this task. The component scores on Career Plans and Lifestyle Plans were found to be significantly different ($p < .05$) between the SSDS students and the Georgia group as shown in Table 3.

A comparison of the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the non-SSDS students and the Georgia sample revealed no significant differences between the two groups.

Table 3

A Comparison of Pre-Test Task 2 (Developing Purpose) Component Means and Standard Deviations Between the SDTI-2 Georgia Sample and the SSDS Students

	SSDS (N = 21)		Georgia (N = 88)		
Components	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	t
Educational Plans	8.29	2.83	9.34	2.90	1.52
Career Plans	7.14	2.89	9.24	3.25	2.92*
Lifestyle Plans	7.43	3.29	9.20	2.93	2.32*

*$p \leq .05$

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to determine what differences might exist in the developmental levels of students from disadvantaged backgrounds compared with regularly admitted students as measured by the SDTI-2. Perhaps the most important finding of the investigation revealed that no significant differences on the three developmental tasks of developing autonomy, purpose, or interpersonal relations were found to exist between the two groups on either the pre-test or post-test mean scores. The fact that no differences were found between the sample and the control group suggests that young adult college students, no matter what their socio-economic backgrounds, tend to have similar developmental patterns in the area of personal growth. Students from both groups did receive higher post-test than pre-test scores on Autonomy and on Purpose which is possibly due to the course content of Guidance 100, Self Development and Career Exploration in which the two groups were enrolled.

When compared with the Georgia group, however, the pre-test mean scores of disadvantaged students for the sub-tasks of Appropriate Career and Appropriate Lifestyle Plans are significantly lower. High achievement in developing appropriate career plans is measured by a greater "awareness of the world of work, an accurate understanding of one's abilities and limitations, a knowledge of requirements for various occupations, and an understanding of the emotional and educational demands of different kinds of jobs" (Winston et al., 1981, p. 430). Closely related to career plans, the development of more mature lifestyle plans is described as achieving a future-focused orientation that balances career, personal values, leisure time activities, and future family plans. Although further studies will be needed to confirm this observation, the Guidance 100 course may have assisted the SSDS students in the development of career and lifestyle planning. This type of course may be helpful in remediating the student to the level of the Georgia sample.

In that both groups of Murray State's students' post-test scores approximated the Georgia sample (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1979a), it may be concluded that the SDTI-2 is an appropriate instrument to use in identifying the relative stage of student progression through the developmental tasks as defined by the instrument. Further studies on developmental tasks achievement by disadvantaged students should be conducted since repetition will document validity. Likewise, additional research on students of disadvantaged backgrounds from higher academic classifications (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) should be made for comparison with comparable nondisadvantaged students for growth in developmental tasks.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be suggested that the economically disadvantaged student might well benefit through the provision of more opportunities in career and personal self-exploration type classroom work and individual counseling to develop and establish more mature purpose in a life that balances vocational interest, pesonal values, learned skills, hobbies and future family plans.

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